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THE
RELATION OF THE PHYSICIAN
TO THE
EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

Read before the Academy of Medicine, Indianapolis, Tuesday evening, January 21, 1873, and reprinted from the Indiana Journal of Medicine.

By H. W. WILEY, M. D., Ph. D.

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THE RELATION OF THE PHYSICIAN TO THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

[Read before the Academy of Medicine, Indianapolis.]

BY H. W. WILEY, M. D., INDIANAPOLIS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:—I appear before you to-night a victim to the tendency of the age. The spirit of constitutional infringement has at last infected the Academy of Medicine, and the roster, that palladium of our liberties, has been ruthlessly violated. It is a sweet consolation to one who has been injured to know that wrong doing never goes unpunished. Sooner or later the criminal meets his just recompense of reward. And now after the lapse of a single week this august body is called upon to expiate its crime. The punishment is severe but merited.

In the execution of this penalty I desire to call your attention for a short time to a subject which nearly concerns us all, viz.: What are the relations of the physician to education?

The physician of the present day must be a teacher. He can not help himself if he would. Every day, it

may be unconsciously to him, his words, his example, his thoughts, have their influence upon his patients. The doctor has taken the place of the priest. He is now the Father Confessor, and to him are revealed secrets which the confessional has never known.

It is a truly valuable study to trace the causes which have evolved from sorcery and incantation, the mighty science whose pulses now thrill throughout the majestic body of civilization.

In early times when men first began to think, disease was supposed to be the influence of an evil spirit. In the very first glimmerings of intelligence good and evil were distinguished. Certain actions or certain influences were seen to result in happiness, physical well-being and contentment; other habits and actions were noticed to produce the opposite states. Soon, and naturally, all well being was referred to the good, and all ill being to the evil. But the lively imagination of the primitive man could not be satisfied with this; each good and each evil must have a real existence, and hence arose the complex systems of polytheism which spring up in the early history of every people.

As disease therefore was considered to be the presence of an evil spirit, the physician was either the priest or the wizard, and usually both in one.

A physician of this kind of course could not have much to do with the development of his race. Any growth which might occur would take place in spite of him, instead of by his aid. His fellows might look upon him in awe, but would have no desire to follow in his steps. Indeed, it was to his interest to keep the people in profound ignorance of his power. To have known would have been to have suffered disillusion, and this he could not afford to allow.

Quackery in the olden time, even as now, could not endure the light of free investigation. The physician therefore, at first, was the antipode of the teacher. His

object was to mystify, not to clear up; to make complicated not plain. His only hope of preserving his power was to conceal his weakness; his only means of retaining confidence to abuse it. How much human nature is still like itself after thousands of years of evolution!

I have referred to this primitive stage of medicine in order to have a standard of comparison. We see by it that the early doctor was a negative not a positive teacher.

If the profession of the present day has made any improvement over the old condition of things, it will very readily appear. With Hippocrates, the true physician first appears. Not only does he present himself as a healer of diseases, but also in an aspect, which is no less truly medical, as a teacher of the people. He not only desired to cure, but also to instruct.

But neither Hippocrates nor Galen, nor their worthy co-laborers and students, could at once revolutionize the world.

The remedies prescribed were not potent unless the wizard priest should first exercise his charms upon them. The mutterings of meaningless syllables, the pompous and persistent imposition of hands, the burning of incense and the display of grotesque gesticulation, were for many centuries still believed to be the efficacious means of driving away the demon of disease.

When the light of intellectual growth which burned brightly two thousand years ago, was extinguished in the night of the dark ages, the office of physician became again for the most part the work of the magician. Strange compounds, prepared from the most loathsome parts of hateful reptiles and other animals, were brewed and administered as remedies of superhuman preparation and power. The spells and incantations used were very much like those so beautifully described by Shakespeare in the witch scene in Macbeth. Throughout the whole we may trace the constant refrain,

“Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”

There was a firm belief in panaceas, and the search for them, constantly fruitless, was never wholly given over. The philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life which would give perpetual youth, were the objects of special search.

Wagner, old, gray and haggard, in his black laboratory attempts the formation of a new being, and after years of patient toil sees its outlines in the flask and dies in a terrific explosion.

Goethe represents Faust as one of the thoughtful physicians, who, after practicing his art for a long time quits it in disgust and makes a confession of his career. I can give you no better picture of the medieval doctor than by quoting some of his words:

“How few the steps up to yonder stone! Here we will rest for a time from our journeying. Here, wrapped in thought, I have often sat alone and calmed myself with prayers and fastings. Rich in hope and firm in faith, with tears and sighs and wringing of hands I thought to compel the end of the plague from the Lord of Heaven. The wail of the multitude sounded to me like the day of doom. O, could you read my inmost soul, how little you would esteem father and son worthy of honor!

“My father was a worthy man with peculiar notions, who meditated after his own style upon nature and her holy powers, who shut himself up with alchemists in his dingy laboratory. This is his prescription: ‘A red lion, a bold lover, marries the lily in the tepid bath, and both then were tortured with flaming fire from one bridal chamber to another. If then the young queen appeared in the glass with varied hues, there was the medicine. The patients died and no one asked who recovered. So have we with these hellish electuaries, here in these valleys and villages, slain more than the plague. I myself have given the poison a thousand times.’”

These are the words of a thoughtful man who saw that his profession was a cheat, and he himself a monster and not a benefactor. Surely such as these could not be teachers of their kind.

The long pole of Luther's reformation stirred the stagnant intellectual cesspool to its depths. Medicine, with every other science, received a fresh impulse. But unfortunately in medicine, as in religion, the reformation did not stop at the proper point, but was rapidly pushed into extremes and sectarianism. The most absurd faith was reposed in certain remedies and processes, everything not recognized and recommended by the *faculty*, was rigidly excluded although of undeniable merit. It was the old story of the blind following the blind. The extremes of sects are the natural reaction against tyrannous and long continued monocracy. Men revel in their new freedom, and with that strange infatuation which leads them on to unconscious suicide, abuse it. Around these intemperate men schools are formed which rapidly extend their membership until all are embraced in them. One of these schools becomes pre-eminent, generally in wildness of theory and blindness of practice, as well as in numbers. This becomes the "regular profession," and is a law and conscience to its members. They yield to it a blind and narrow obedience.

At the present day, when the "regular profession" have become the true eclectics, using freely everything which is proved good, we scarcely can conceive of the blind obedience our predecessors gave to authority three hundred, two hundred, one hundred, even fifty years ago. Moliere, in his fine satire of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, gives a fine stylograph of the typical physician to whom I refer, at the same time illustrating the confidence reposed in him by the people.

Erastus—Looking for a doctor addresses an apothecary whom he mistakes for one: "I believe, sir, you are

the doctor who has been consulted on my recommendation.

The Apothecary—No, sir; I am not the doctor, that honor does not belong to me; I am only the apothecary, at your service.

Erastus—Is the doctor at home?

Apothecary—Yes, he is now engaged with some patients, and I will tell him directly you are here.

Erastus—No, do not stir; I will wait until he is done. This visit is for the purpose of placing in the doctor's care a certain person we have with us and of whom the doctor has been spoken to, and who is troubled with a slight attack of insanity, which we would be very glad to have him cured of before he is married.

Apothecary—I know what it is. I know what it is. I was with him when he was spoken to about the case. Believe me, you could not have applied to a more skillful physician; he is a man who has medicine at his finger tips, just as I have my faith in heaven, and who, when any one is to be treated, will never step aside one iota from the rules of the ancients. Yes, he follows the grand old road, the grand old road, and never looks for mid day at four o'clock. For all the money in the world he would not cure a person with other remedies than those which the faculty recommend.

Erastus—It is a good principle. A patient ought not to get well without the consent of the faculty.

Apothecary—It is not because we are great friends that I speak of it, but there is a pleasure in being *his* patient. I would much rather die under his remedies than to get well under those of another. Whenever he comes one feels assured that things will always be done in order; and if you die under his treatment your heirs will have nothing to reproach you with.

Erastus—That is a grand consolation for a dead man.

Apothecary—Assuredly, it is much better to die methodically. As to the rest, he is not one of those doctors

who make sickness a matter of speculation. He is a quick man, a rapid man, who is eager to get rid of his patients; and when one has to die he brings about the result as rapidly as possible.

Erastus—There is nothing like going at a thing promptly.

Apothecary—That is true, it is necessary to know quickly the course and length of a disease.

Erastus—You are right.

Apothecary—For instance, three of my children, whom he did me the honor to treat during their sickness, died in less than four days, who in the hands of another would have languished more than three months.

Erastus—It is a good thing to have such friends as that.

Apothecary—Without doubt. He has left me two children, of whom he takes care as if they were his own. He uses them and controls them according to his fancy without any interference on my part; and very frequently when I return from the city I find them bled or purged by his order."

This is scarcely an overdrawn feature. The patient in this case was bled fifteen times by the doctor's order, "And is he not yet well?" inquires the doctor, "No." "This proves that the disease is not in the blood, we will have him purged as many times to see if it be not in the humors."

In this man we have the type of the iron clad doctor, one who regards not the patient but the books, with whom the authority of the fathers has more weight than the reason and common sense of the sons. Happily their number, though not yet few, is not as it once was, legion.

Such men were not true educators; their followers were blind followers, not intelligent students. They had therefore no influence upon intellectual education.

In this hasty sketch of the past relations of the phy-

sicians to education, we have seen that with the exception of a brief era in Grecian history, and a still briefer one in the history of Rome, the medical profession was never an aid but always a hindrance to the education of the people. In other words there was no rational medicine, for rational medicine is always docent—it teaches as well as cures.

We now approach the vital part of our subject, the profession of the present day. We notice first how carefully medical science has been built up. It was a long struggle to eliminate every trace of the old system of magic and supernatural therapeutics.

But the underlying sciences of chemistry, anatomy and physiology would tolerate nothing of the kind. There was no denying that even the senseless twaddle and impotent applications of the magic doctor had produced good effects, but physiology stepped to the front and explained how this was effected through the nervous system, demonstrating the intimate relations existing between the nervous centers and the organic functions.

The great truths which support modern medicine were published to the world. They were generally received by doctors, and by them disseminated among the people. Men began to realize that they were truly, "fearfully and wonderfully made." The mysterious union of body and soul was brought as it were bodily before men's eyes; they were compelled to think, and to be thinking is to be educating.

There is no kind of study so well adapted to intellectual development, as the study of the nature of things. Metaphysics is but another name for acute ignorance. The ego and the non-ego, the realist and nominalist are delusions; physicians have, therefore, been unconsciously the cause of a great intellectual awakening, a revival of learning. It was the study of chemistry for medical purposes which gave the grand impulse which has made,

and is still making, chemistry the glory of science. It was the study of anatomy for medical uses that turned the attention of some to the study of comparative anatomy, upon which natural history, as a science, is based. Now, the world over, immense collections of specimens, like the Peabody at Salem, and Agassiz's museum at Cambridge, have brought together the chief types of animal life that are found living or extinct upon the earth. It was the study of physiology in its relations to pathology, which first led to a true science of life and the relations of man to the physical world. The development of this science in late years has been truly wonderful. Flint and Maudsley have entered the unexplored regions of mind, the cosmos, and have drawn near the fountain of life. The great currents of thought have been turned into new channels; the old science of mental philosophy, which had never been anything but a castle in the air, has been brought down to earth and set upon a stable foundation; the vagaries of phrenology have been curbed and corrected, and psychology has assumed a high place among the sciences.

It is not claimed that all these great influences have been due wholly to medicine, but it is undeniable that they all had their rise and received their first fostering care within the profession. Physicians have always been the first to recognize the merit of any new truth which affected nearly the happiness of mankind. Thus we see from this cursory view that the physician within the last fifty years, has had a mighty influence upon the progress of thought, and has in reality been the most potent factor in the education of the people. The bread he cast upon the waters has returned to him after many days, bringing riches and blessings.

But his work is by no means done; he has only entered upon it. Heretofore he has been a teacher, for the most part, incidentally; hereafter he must be one directly. The age demands his instruction, it will com-

pel him if he refuses. First of all he is needed in the common school. If there is any one thing of which our civilization may justly be proud, it is our system of public instruction. It is at once both the substratum of the state and its crowning glory.

Look only at our own city, the poor man's child and the rich man's heir sit side by side at their studies; for a part of the day at least the poor tenement house and the gilded palace are forgotten, while the same treasures are offered to both. The Irish peasant's boy, the son of the emigrant from Saxony, the child of Norway's snow clad hills, and Africa's dusky offspring, are equal sharers with the native children. The State will forget her highest duty, sow the seeds of decay and inaugurate her own ruin, when she ceases to foster and strengthen the public schools.

But they are not yet perfect. The physician's work in them is not yet accomplished. In the present working of things there is a lack of systematic culture. The brain of the child is over stimulated, his body is neglected. The one object is perfect lessons; to secure these the child's natural gaiety is subdued; he has no chance to romp when so many things are to be learned by heart. He becomes precocious. The teacher calls him her *little man*, the parents are delighted with his progress, and encourage him to be even more like a man.

This premature refining ruins everything. It stops growth and stamps mediocrity, sometimes even imbecility on the mind. The organic functions are disturbed; the girl is a woman at thirteen and old at twenty. The body is stunted as well as the brain. The cheeks are pale and the muscles flabby. The fire which burned so brightly at ten is dimmed at fifteen and only dead ashes are left at twenty-five. These certainly are extreme cases, but their number is not few. There is always a tendency to go in that direction. I doubt very much whether any boy or girl can take the whole continuous



course from the primary through the High School and come out perfectly sound. The greater number of course make average men and women, a few becoming shining lights, as many are utterly broken in mind, in body, and all are more or less victims of a well meaning but dangerous system.

It is the duty of the physician to see that this over-mental crowding is corrected, that more attention be paid to hygiene and physical culture in the schools, that we begin with kinder-gartens, where the children will be taught to play, and allowed to grow healthy, strong and symmetrical. Close study is distasteful to the child. He is in a negative condition; his business is to grow; but he is by no means lazy. A lazy child is always diseased either from natural heritage or from post-natal neglect or abuse.

The establishment of the kinder-garten would be a step in the right direction. In the kinder-garten the child learns unconsciously. While he is amused he is instructed. He enters with zest into all its exercises; at the close of the day's duties he is refreshed, not exhausted, and eager for the morrow which will bring a like experience.

It is the province of the physician to see that these changes in the system of instruction for children, are inaugurated. The unanimous voice of the profession would compel obedience. Our school boards are perhaps not composed of angels, but they are more ignorant than wicked. Their sins of commission are not a few, but those of omission are in an immense majority.

The city has a board of health. Not only should the jurisdiction of this board extend over hospitals and pest houses, sewers and starch factories, back yards and slop barrels, but also over the public schools. Last week I was in a recitation room with forty young boys and girls; half of them looked sleepy and spiritless. When the class came in, the room was cold and the windows tightly

closed. The stove was filled with fresh coals and the recitation commenced. One girl could not recite for a severe headache; another had not felt well enough to prepare her lesson; half a dozen were coughing; three-fourths of them were afflicted more or less by colds. By this time the stove was red hot. There was no thermometer in the room, but I am confident had there been one, it would have shown an increase of at least thirty degrees in the temperature. There was no water basin on the stove and the air in the room was very dry. The scholars complained of the heat, the teacher had the windows opened, a great flood of air sixty or seventy degrees colder than the atmosphere of the room, came pouring in over the heads and shoulders of those next the window; a half dozen puny pale-faced girls occupied the back seat. In a few moments they were shivering, the windows were closed, the stove reheated and the same process repeated. Thus it goes on from day to day in hundreds of rooms the winter long. Is there no duty here for the physician? The argument is so plain that it is not necessary to pursue it further.

The physician has intimate relations to education in preserving the growing brain of the child from over-work, and his body from underwork and neglect. I believe the time is soon coming when he will be called on to fulfill these relations as he now presides over public hospitals and quarantines. The sooner the day comes when he shall exercise this oversight of the public education the better will it be for child and the after man.

Another very important phase in which the physician of to-day appears as an educator, is in his daily intercourse with his patients. Notwithstanding the great diffusion of medical knowledge of late years, it can not be denied that the majority of men are still woefully ignorant of the very elementary notions of their own constitution and the laws which govern it. Strange as it

may seem that men should be so indifferent about what concern them most, it is nevertheless true. Outside of the medical profession the number of persons is ridiculously small who have a clear knowledge of the relations of the various parts of the body and their functions. They know they have lungs because they breathe, stomachs because they eat, but in regard to how breathing supplies life, or how the stomach acts on the food they are profoundly ignorant. They have doubtless heard of ventilation, but knowing nothing of its philosophy they naturally neglect it; they have read of cleanliness, but being ignorant of the functions of the skin they deem bathing a matter of taste, and not a necessity. And so we might continue the whole catalogue of organic functions parallel with a catalogue of their neglect.

The physician must see to it that this wide spread ignorance is dispelled, this universal indifference broken up. In the discharge of this duty, he will achieve a double purpose. In the first he will divert the mind of his patient from the disease upon which it broods with a morbid pertinacity. He will turn the patient's thoughts to the great truths of physiology, to the chemistry of respiration and digestion; to the great problems of vitality. The patient under a skillful instructor will soon become interested in these things, they will occupy his thoughts and engage his time. Every physician knows the value of thus turning a patient away from himself and directing his thoughts into another channel. Nature is exceedingly careless when she looks at herself, and is very apt to go wrong when engaged in self inspection. In the second place the physician while thus calling the attention of the sick man from his own sufferings, will sow the seeds of hygiene broadcast. Not only the patient, but the friends of him also, and the chance visitor will be instructed.

There was once a cry that the physician could not afford to educate the people, they would learn not only to

take care of their health, but also to do their own doctoring. The doctor would thus be left a pill bagged Othello with his occupation gone; it would be in short, professional suicide. Such a base sentiment could only come from a quack. The physician who is a competent teacher will never lose but gain practice. He will be reverenced and loved by his patrons, and his good name and fame will be spread abroad throughout the land. Children, and children's children, will rise up to call him blessed. But even were it so, that such teachings would conquer disease and bring in the physical millennium, no true physician would hesitate a moment. Bread and butter with him are secondary things; the primary one right and duty—in the pursuit of these there is no failure, all is honor and reward.

We will consider in the third place, the relation of the physician to higher mental culture. The new psychology which is rapidly supplanting the old system of mental philosophy, has already been spoken of. The mind has been developed with entirely new relations to the body. The old mental philosophy allowed nothing for the brain or body, the system was developed arbitrarily by a certain process of self inspection; the brain was entirely ignored, the rest of the body did not even receive this poor distinction. Of necessity such a system could be nothing but a jumble and mixture of errors in which the terms *science* and *system* were both misnomers.

Here, then, we find the starting point of the higher culture. It is eminently fitting that the only true science of mind should have been developed by the physician. We therefore find the profession now in wholly new relations to our colleges and universities.

The curse of our American colleges—I speak it with all reverence but with most earnest conviction—has been and is religious sectarianism. In the first place this baneful influence has manifested itself in the establish-

ment of a number of colleges vastly greater than could be properly endowed. In the second place the evil has been as great in the selection of the corps of instructors. It is a sad truth, but none the less true because sad, that three-fourths of all the college professors in the past have been chosen because of their religious belief and pulpit power. Not only is the preacher called to be the professor of Moral Science, but he is supposed to be especially fitted for every other department of instruction. The Rev. Saw Air is called to be Prof. of Mathematics, probably because in his pulpit ministrations he represented so many geometrical figures. There is also, a Rev. Prof. of Latin, a Rev. Prof. of Greek, a Rev. Chemist, a Rev. Philosopher, a Rev. Logician, a Rev. Political Economist, and so on to the end. Even the janitor is expected to be able to preach in case of necessity, and from our experience here we would have no doubt of his ability. I believe Harvard is the only college in the United States which is not presided over by a Rev. Dr. of Divinity.

Now I do not wish to be understood as speaking disrespectfully of these worthy men, I value them highly and am only sorry to see them out of place. Of all professional men the preacher has certainly the least knowledge of man, and is therefore least fitted to conduct the higher education of the young. The sacred desk surely does not qualify for the professor's chair. The cultured physician is certainly better fitted by his training, to superintend and conduct the higher education. To him the great problems of mental science present themselves with peculiar force. Man to him is a reality, not a milenial possibility; he doubtless thinks of him perfected and pure, but he does not shut his eyes to what he is.

The physician has studied profoundly physiological action; studied it as it only can be studied, by comparison with disorder and disease. He sees in man not mind alone, but a physical frame most exquisitely formed,

most delicately balanced, with most wonderful relations. Through, by and in this body are exhibited all the phases of thought, all the products of education, all the graces of culture. He knows that practically the intellect and the brain are inseparable. To consider it apart is to pass beyond human perception—as the brain is so is the mind. This is a truth which no one but an idiot or an American college professor would care to deny. But the brain is only a part of the body, its character depends of course much upon natural heritage; but it may be protected, fostered and improved—like the lungs or the stomach, but if disease once sets in it is hard to find a mental cod liver oil or an intellectual pepsin.

Thus it becomes eminently proper that physicians should be intimately connected with this high cerebral culture. Studying the peculiarities of each individual student, he could devise plans suited to each case. Knowing the laws of healthy growth he could guard every student from disease. The days of puny students and crazy scholars would quickly pass away, the narrowing influences of sect and dogmas would disappear, men would seek the truth and find it in healthy bodies, brains and minds.

We would not banish preachers from the schools,—under proper direction they might do much good. But we do hope soon to see the day when the teacher of high culture will not only be required to know the science which he teaches, but what is still of greater importance, the mind, brain and body, which are taught.

Lastly, let us consider for a few moments the physician as a teacher in his own profession. Every year thousands of young men are applying for admission as students to private offices and medical colleges. The great majority of them come with an ardent desire to learn, very few of them appreciate the magnitude of the undertaking. The character of the student, and the position he may afterwards obtain, depend much upon the

work of the preceptor, more even than upon the lectures which he may hear in college.

The first thing to be taught is the humanity of his chosen profession. It is not merely a money making business. What he may make out of it should always be thought of as second, not first. He is to go about relieving the sufferings of his fellows, and the true physician feels more real pleasure when he does this than when he receives his fee. To this end he must be taught self sacrifice, taught to forego many of the pleasures of life, taught to endure exposure and undergo fatigue for others. These are the first lessons which the preceptor will be called upon to teach, and they constitute no small part of the preliminary education.

The medical teacher must next develop the studies of the course in their true grandeur. He must teach his pupil that it is not only necessary to learn these things which he will actually need at the bed side, but also to investigate thoroughly the various sciences which bear directly or remotely upon his profession, that he may be always ready not only to heal but also to instruct.

I have thus endeavored to present to the Academy the outlines of a subject upon which I have thought much in the special relations which I have had to education. The more I think upon the subject, the farther I push my investigations into the wants and shortcomings of our schools and colleges, the more am I convinced that we, as a profession, should take a more active part in general education, should hasten to occupy the places for which our peculiar training so naturally adapts us.

In conclusion, I submit these hurried thoughts to the consideration of the Academy.





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